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A
D I A L O G U E
BETWEEN
AN ASSOCIATOR.
AND
A WELL-INFORMED
E N G L I S H M A N,
ON
THE GROUNDS OF THE LATE
A S S O C I A T I O N S,
AND
THE COMMENCEMENT OF
A W A R W I T H F R A N C E.

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DIALOGUE, &c.

Mr. MORDAUNT, Mr. GRANTLEY.

Mr. MORDAUNT.

FROM the friendship which has so long subsisted between us, I am induced, Mr. Grantley, to take the liberty of asking you a few questions relative to your political conduct; and which, I know, your candour will excuse. What were your inducements for subscribing to the late Association of the town of *****, to which I saw your name affixed in the papers?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—My inducements, Sir? A desire to join a body of peaceable and substantial inhabitants and traders of the town, in order to secure our common property from any attacks of lawless violence, and the excellent

government under which we live, from any of the wild schemes of Republicans and Levellers. My property, my good friend, has cost me a great deal of time and pains to accumulate; and I am not willing to be deprived of it, or that it should be put to hazard, in order to comply with the reveries, or to gratify the wishes, of those who have no property to lose.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I take it for granted, my dear friend, that your designs were good; and you were certainly right to endeavour to secure your property, if it was in danger. But I have no conception that it was in any danger; and it appears to me, that the paper you signed was drawn up in terms, and contained sentiments, not very congenial to what used to be the free spirit of this country. No man is more an enemy than myself to any acts of violence against the persons or property of individuals, and to the idea of promoting liberty by a disregard to law. But we should remember, that the security of property which has long obtained in this country, has resulted from the freedom of our constitution, and not from associations for the support of prerogative. If our ancestors had not been wisely jealous of authority, and solicitous to keep it within proper bounds, we should not at this time

time have any security either for our property, or for our personal liberties.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Sir, the very title of our Association implies, that we had not forgotten the importance of liberty; for it is styled “ an Association for the preservation of Liberty and Property.”

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I observed that it was so styled, but, as I think, with very little consistency; for I have no idea of that sort of liberty, which excludes the freedom of speaking, and of writing. You say in your declaration, “ We will exert our most diligent endeavours to suppress seditious clubs, seditious conversation, and seditious publications.”

Mr. GRANTLEY.—But surely, my good friend, Mr. Mordaunt, men cannot fairly be said to be deprived of the freedom of speaking, or of writing, because they are prohibited from speaking seditiously, from publishing seditious books, or from forming themselves into seditious clubs.

Mr.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Sir, the words SEDITION and SEDITIOUS are very vague words, and of very indeterminate meaning. There can be nothing that deserves the name of liberty in any country, in which every kind of speaking or of writing is prohibited, that will be termed seditious by placemen, pensioners, courtiers, and crown lawyers. And every society which can be instituted, though on the purest and best principles, in which political questions are discussed, and in which a just attention is excited to the general rights of the community, will be termed by such men seditious. If LOCKE on Government, or SYDNEY on Government, were new treatises, no doubt can be entertained, but that many of the modern associators would consider them as seditious publications, and proper subjects for prosecution. Some of the associators also profess themselves to be united, not only for the suppression of seditious publications, but for the suppression of seditious opinions. But in a country, professedly free, are opinions to be combated, not by reason and argument, but by force and violence?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—I admit, that too great restraints ought not to be laid either on speaking
or

or writing. But can it be wrong to put a stop to the publication of such books, as tend to subvert all order and government, and to throw the nation into a state of anarchy and confusion?

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I know not, that any such books have been lately published; but whatever may have been published, the law, or what is called the law, respecting libels, and the powers vested in the crown and the crown officers, are more than sufficient for prosecuting and punishing, with great rigour, all who can with the least shadow of reason be denominated libellers. There could be no possible occasion, therefore, for voluntary associations for this purpose, or for any new methods of restraining the freedom of speaking or of writing.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Sir, it was the opinion of some of my friends and neighbours, in which I concurred, that at the present period it might be useful to strengthen the hands of government, and to do what we could towards supporting the present constitution, and the established laws; by which we supposed we should also take the best method of securing our own property.

Mr.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—It is paying a bad compliment to the government, and to the administration, to suppose, that voluntary associations are necessary to procure obedience to the laws, and the security of property. The executive government of this country is vested with sufficient powers, for all the real purposes for which government is instituted; and if men do not find their persons, or their property, in a state of security, it is not from any want of authority in government. I must also observe, that the idea of securing property, by an indiscriminate support of administration, is not founded on reason, nor countenanced by the evidence of history. In the reign of Charles I. many men of large fortune joined the king, probably under the idea of securing their property, and of putting a speedy termination to popular commotions. But the part they took, in the course of the civil war, deprived them of that property, for the preservation of which they had been so anxious. Had they, on the contrary, opposed, in a regular and legal manner, the arbitrary proceedings of the king, he must have submitted, their property would have been secured, and no civil war would have taken place. If any administration be encouraged,
by

by the fervility and timidity of persons of property, to engage in obnoxious measures of government, the property of these men may often be endangered, by the very means which they take to secure it. The wisest mode of defending the constitution, and securing property, is for men of fortune to oppose, in a legal and constitutional manner, all oppressive, unjust, and impolitic measures of government, and thereby compelling the persons in office to restrain the exertions of prerogative within proper bounds. A reasonable, moderate, and equitable administration, and paying a just attention to the real grievances of the people, is the best method of preserving the constitution, and maintaining national tranquillity.

MR. GRANTLEY.—I believe, Sir, that your observations are just. You have attended to these subjects much more accurately than I have done. But I have been assured, and so have some of my brother associators, by men whom we supposed to be very respectable; that the constitution was in great danger; that conspiracies were formed against it; and that it was necessary, that all real friends to the constitution should unite in its support.

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Mr.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—How can you possibly suppose, my good friend, that any real conspiracy of this kind can have been formed, when, though it is now so long since this report was given out, not a single person has been taken up, even on suspicion of such a plot? The late attorney-general, I am told, condescended to go to the sessions at Clerkenwell, to plead against a poor bill-sticker. Can any man in his senses then believe, that, if any such conspiracy had really existed, the vigilance of government would not have discovered one man, whom they might have had some plausible pretence for apprehending?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Indeed, Sir, it is not very probable. I must acknowledge, that the evidence of the plots has been kept a most profound secret. But you must admit, that libels upon the constitution have been circulated about, and other publications, calculated to give the people an ill opinion of government.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—It has always been supposed in my time, Mr. Grantley, till very lately, by all judicious men, that the people of this country derived the most signal advantages from

from the freedom of the press; and that it was highly beneficial to the community, that the conduct of the persons in administration should be publicly investigated. And as to the apprehensions of the dangers that may arise from what is called libelling the constitution, these appear to me to be the idle terrors of men, who are ignorant even of the first principles of civil government. If the constitution be good, it will bear the fullest and the freest investigation. Indeed, the greatest libellers of the constitution are many of the associators; they who suppose, that it will not stand the test of examination, and that it cannot be supported, but by suppressing the freedom of speaking and of writing. We are sometimes told, that our constitution of government is the best in the world; and we are likewise told, that we have, besides, a very excellent administration. If this be the case, is it possible, that either the constitution, or the government, can be in any real danger from the publication of a few pamphlets?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—The danger cannot probably be great: but it is said, that there are many republicans in the kingdom.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I have not heard even of one republican club in this country, or of any body of men whatever, who have associated for the purpose of establishing a republic. But there may certainly be speculative men in the kingdom, who conceive, that a republic would be better than a limited monarchy. It is no crime for any man to entertain that opinion, if he be guilty of no illegal act in order to support it. There have always been such speculative men in this country, and there ever will be such men in it, till we are become a nation of slaves. What the number of republicans may be in the kingdom, I will not take upon me to determine; but this I will venture to assert, that the present measures of administration are not calculated eventually to lessen their number.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It is certain, that there are sundry societies in the kingdom, the Revolution society, the society for Constitutional Information, and others, who frequently publish votes, and sometimes disperse publications, that give great offence to government, and to many who are considered as moderate men; and I have heard the designs of these societies spoken of as very pernicious. Indeed, it is understood, that
men

men in power, who may reasonably be supposed to have good information, entertained very serious apprehensions respecting the mischiefs which these societies might probably produce.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Unprincipled courtiers and placemen, who fatten on the plunder of the public, are always alarmed at the least approaches towards a national reform. A clamour, therefore, has been artfully raised, which has terrified the timid, and deceived the ignorant and unsuspecting. The prime object of most of the societies of which you speak, was to excite the attention of the people to the necessity of a parliamentary reform; and their designs were unquestionably laudable. These societies were not always thought of so unfavourably as they are at present; nor were they regarded as dangerous. I have seen the present duke of Richmond both at the Revolution society, and at the society for Constitutional Information; he then appeared to enter fully into their views; and so far as I can judge, their designs are as upright now as they were at that period. Sir William Jones, the very learned and excellent judge now in the East Indies, was also one of the members of the society for Constitutional

tional Information, and sometimes wrote odes for the use of that Society; one of which was set to music, and performed at a public dinner of the society. But at that time, it was not thought a discredit to any man to be a friend to the rights of the people; and the duke of Richmond was not then master of the ordinance.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—I believe, however, Mr. Mordaunt, that when the duke of Richmond was a member of those societies, they did not carry on any correspondence with the French nation.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—They did not, Sir. The French Revolution had not then taken place; and there was no reason or opportunity for such a correspondence. But the intercourse of these societies with the people of France has been no discredit to them; the correspondencies of these societies have been grossly and shamefully misrepresented; and they have only been employed as an absurd pretext to deceive and to inflame the nation. These correspondencies were founded on principles of general philanthropy; and not the least evidence has been produced of their originating in motives of any other kind. The
members

members of these societies remembered with the apostle, that God had *made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth*; and they wished, that the blessings of liberty might be extended to all mankind. They certainly differed materially in opinion from many of the associators, who are so far from wishing that liberty may be extended to other nations, that they seem extremely desirous that it may be wholly extinguished in their own country.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—I am convinced, that many have engaged in these associations chiefly from an anxiety for the security of their property, without much attention to any other considerations.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Of this I have no doubt; but the anxiety of men for their property should not make them regardless of their duties, or their rights, as Englishmen. The man who is anxious for his property, and regardless of his liberty, scarcely deserves even to breathe the air of a free country. But with respect to attacks on property, I know that property has been shamefully violated, and the lives of very respectable

spectable men endangered, at Birmingham, and Manchester, and other places; but I know, at the same time, that the actors in these riots, and the instigators of them, these violators of the security of persons and of property, were not those who are called republicans and levellers, but men who professed a very ardent zeal for the church and for the king; and every man knows, that these loyal rioters have not been prosecuted by the government with too much severity. I have heard of no riots in any part of England, by Republicans and Levellers. All the rioters, who have lately made any distinguished figure, were Church and King men.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—One idea which has prevailed, and which has contributed to enflame the minds of some persons, is, that pains had been taken to propagate among the common people the doctrine of EQUALITY; or, that all persons should be rendered equal in point of fortune, or property: a doctrine, which would certainly lead to great confusion, and to very serious evils.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—The doctrine of an equality of property has not been propagated by
any

any of the societies of the friends of liberty in Great Britain. It has not been propagated by the Revolution society, by the society for Constitutional Information, or by any of the societies for parliamentary reform, or by any society of the friends of freedom of which I have ever heard. It is equally certain, that it is neither advanced nor recommended in the writings of Mr. Paine. If the doctrine has been at all disseminated among the people, it has been by those truly libellous publications, which have been issued by the pretended associators against republicans and levellers. In order to calumniate the real friends of freedom, they have undertaken to refute a doctrine which no man advanced; and thereby may have communicated some ideas of an equality of property to the lowest of the vulgar, which may at some time be productive of mischief. But it has been justly observed by the bishop of Landaff, that “if any persons have been so simple as to suppose, that even the French ever intended by the term EQUALITY, an equality of property, they have been quite mistaken in their ideas.” This learned prelate also adds, that “the French never understood by it, any thing materially different from what we and our ancestors have

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“ been

“ been in full possession of for many ages.” This
 is probably speaking too strongly; but the
 French certainly meant an equality of rights,
 and not an equality of property. The ideas of the
 popular societies in England concerning equal-
 ity are perfectly conformable to those of the
 duke of Richmond, who says, in his letter to
 lieutenant-colonel Sharman, “ The equal rights
 “ of men to security from oppression, and to the
 “ enjoyment of life and liberty, strikes me as
 “ perfectly compatible with their unequal shares
 “ of industry, labour, and genius, which are the
 “ origin of inequality of fortunes.” Nor do
 any of the popular societies carry their ideas of
 the importance, or extent, of a parliamentary
 reform, farther than that nobleman. He says,
 in the same letter: “ The subject of a parlia-
 “ liamentary reform is that which of all others,
 “ in my opinion, most deserves the attention of
 “ the public;—and, from every day’s experience
 “ to the present hour, I am more and more con-
 “ vinced, that the restoring the right of voting
 “ universally to every man, not incapacitated by na-
 “ ture for want of reason, or by law for the com-
 “ mission of crimes, together with annual elec-
 “ tions, is the only reform that can be effectual
 “ and permanent.” The same noble writer
 likewise

likewise says in that letter, after stating that no effectual reform was to be expected from the house of commons themselves, “ It is from “ the people at large that I expect any good.”

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Besides the particular doctrine of equality, I have heard much said concerning the diligence, with which French principles in general have been propagated in this country, as well as in others; and the danger of the contagion of those principles has been strongly urged.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—But what are these French principles, concerning which so much alarm has been spread? Before we join in abusing French principles, these principles should be more distinctly specified. What are called French principles appear manifestly to have had their origin in England; and to be the same which have been advanced by some of the best and ablest of the English writers. The French nation has maintained, that “ All men are born, and remain, free and equal in rights; that social distinctions cannot be founded but on common utility; that the end of all political distinctions is the preservation of the natural

and imprescriptible rights of man ; that these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance against oppression ; that the principle of sovereignty resides essentially in the nation, or people at large ; and that no body of men, nor any individual, can exercise an authority that does not emanate expressly from that source." These are the principles which appear to have given so much offence to the German despots ; but in what respect do they differ from the principles of SYDNEY and of LOCKE ? SYDNEY has proved, that " all just magistratical power is from the people ; and that liberty is the right of all mankind ;" and LOCKE maintains, that " all legitimate government is derived from the consent of the people ; that men are naturally equal, and that no one has a right to injure another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions ; that no man in civil society ought to be subject to the arbitrary will of others, but only to known and established laws, made by general consent for the common benefit ; that no taxes are to be levied on the people, without the consent of the majority, given by themselves, or by their deputies ; that kings and princes, magistrates and rulers of every class, have no just authority but what is delegated to them by the

the people; and which, when not employed for their benefit, the people have always a right to resume, in whatever hands it may be placed." The French principles have been assigned as a reason for engaging in a war with France; but are we to carry on a war against France, to eradicate such principles as these, to eradicate the principles of SYDNEY and of LOCKE? Of all the nations of the earth, are the people of England to be selected, to engage in a crusade, to prevent the propagation of the principles of liberty?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Whatever the principles may be, which have been propagated in France, it cannot be questioned, but that many acts of violence and cruelty have been perpetrated in that country since the revolution.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—As to the acts of cruelty, violence, or injustice, which may have been committed in France since the revolution, that some such scenes should have taken place can be a subject of surprise to no man, who has any knowledge of human nature, or acquaintance with the history of the world. It could not be expected, that so enormous a system of civil,
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ecclesiastical, and aristocratical tyranny, as that of which the old government was composed, could be so completely overturned, without very violent convulsions. It must also be remembered, that the formation and establishment of a new system of government, so as to give complete satisfaction to twenty-five millions of people, must be a work of extreme difficulty. And even the best and the wisest men, engaged in so arduous a work, would often find their efforts embarrassed, or frustrated, by the intrigues, ambition, or perversity, of such evil-minded or absurd men, as are to be found in every country under heaven. It will undoubtedly be a very desirable thing to see tranquillity established in France; but the German despots, who entered that country with their numerous and mercenary armies, had certainly no design to communicate to the French nation a happy mixture of liberty and law; nor was the tyrannical, insolent, and savage manifesto of the duke of Brunswick, well adapted to that end.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—But what, Mr. Mor-daunt, have you to say, with respect to the manner in which the French put their late king to death, who was certainly not one of the worst princes of the Bourbon race?

Mr.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Whether Louis XVI. the late king of France, was put to death justly, or unjustly, is a matter in which the people of England have very little concern, and which can undoubtedly afford no proper ground for any war with the French nation. This is admitted even by Mr. Pitt himself. When Charles I. was executed before the front of his own palace, France did not go to war with England on that account, though Charles's queen was a French princess. No nation can ever have a right to dictate to other nations, what shall be their mode of government, or what their conduct to their princes. This appears to me to be unquestionable, and to be a part of the law of nations; though it may possibly be disputed by Mr. Burke. For, before the execution of Louis, that gentleman declared, that “ he thought the king of France to be as much an object both of policy and of compassion as the grand seignior, or his states.” And, perhaps, if the Turkish nation had taken it into their heads to depose, or behead the grand seignior, and to abolish the excellent system of government which prevails in Turkey, Mr. Burke might have thought it a just subject of very pathetic lamentation; and might have been

been of opinion, that it was a proper thing to send an English fleet and army to Constantinople, to correct the seditious ideas which the Turks began to adopt, and to lead them to a due submission to their lawful and established government.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Mr. Burke's ideas of kings, and of courts, were not, I think, always so reverential as they are at present.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—By no means. He formerly spoke of kings as naturally lovers of low company, which was not placing them in a light the most respectable; and, in 1780, he told the citizens of Bristol, that it was at that time “ the plan of the court to make its servants “ (that is, the ministry) insignificant;” though he observed, that “ among the frolics of the “ court, it might at length take that of attending to its business.” He also told them, that if the people chose their representatives on the same principles with which the court chose its ministers, there would be no hopes of safety for the state. “ If the people,” said he, “ should “ choose their servants on the same principles of “ mere obsequiousness, and flexibility, and total “ vacancy

“ vacancy or indifference of opinion in all public
 “ matters, then no part of the state will be
 “ found; and it will be in vain to think of
 “ saving it.”

Mr. GRANTLEY.—These compliments to the court were certainly not of the most flattering kind; but, to leave Mr. Burke, I have met with some persons who consider the conduct of the French in Germany, and in Flanders, as very indefensible. Not content with establishing a republic in their own country, they have endeavoured to propagate principles of government similar to their own in the dominions of foreign princes.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—But, my dear Sir, it must be remembered, that the countries into which the French entered, previously to the declaration of war against England and Holland, were the territories of princes who had entered France with fire and sword; and that, in perfect conformity to the laws of war, they had an undoubted right to attack the dominions of these princes. The invasion of France by the Austrians and Prussians was repugnant to every principle of justice and the law of nations; and,

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when the French had driven them out of their own dominions, they had an incontestable right, according to the rules of war, to enter the Austrian or Prussian dominions, and, if they could make themselves masters of them, or of any part of them, to treat the inhabitants as conquered enemies. But what has so much exasperated the German despots has been, that the French, not content with defeating the princes by whom they have been attacked, have been solicitous to communicate liberty to their subjects. This is considered as an inexpiable crime; but it might be presumed, that it would not have excited any great indignation in Englishmen.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It has been asserted, that the French have sent over agents, in order to excite tumults and rebellion in Great Britain.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Yes, I know that it has been said, in an advertisement of one of the associations, and I think the worst and the most unconstitutional of all the associations, that “ the
“ emissaries of France were very numerous, and
“ active to seduce the people of this country,
“ and to excite them to insurrection.” But, from the best information which I can collect upon
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the subject, I am convinced, that this is a groundless assertion; and, indeed, not the least evidence of the existence of such emissaries in this country has ever been produced.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It must be acknowledged, that these French agents have kept themselves in a state of great privacy; for I have never met with one of them myself, nor do I know of any man who has.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Whatever our sentiments may be, concerning the late transactions in France, and the circumstances attending the Revolution in that country, there cannot surely be any very good reason, why Englishmen should discover so much alacrity, as many of the associators seem to do, in surrendering up some of their most important rights. For the people of England to be forming associations, in every part of the kingdom, to destroy the freedom of the press, and freedom of speech, appears to me to be very much like the inhabitants of a country confederating together, in order to enslave themselves: which is a thing somewhat new in the history of mankind.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Though there may be improprieties in the declarations of some of the associators, it cannot be supposed, that the generality of those, who have joined in these associations, have any design to destroy their own liberties.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Whatever their intentions may be, many of their declarations are extremely hostile to the freedom of the press, and to freedom of speech, and are such as could never have been expected to appear in a free country. I have copied out some of the resolutions of different bodies of associators; and, among others, I find that the worthy inhabitants of Basingstoke, in Hampshire, have resolved, “That it is highly expedient to caution all
 “inn-keepers, and victuallers, not to permit
 “any seditious publications TO BE READ, or
 “DEBATED, in their respective houses.” To a foreigner, who should read this advertisement, it would appear somewhat extraordinary, that, in England, which formerly was celebrated as a country distinguished for its liberty, common publicans should be invested with a power of dictating to their customers what books they should read, and about what they should debate,
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and be supposed proper persons to determine what books were, or were not seditious. Dr. Sacheverell, bishop Atterbury, the advocates of the house of Stuart, and the old Tories, would have been ashamed of proposing what is done by the modern associators under a prince of the house of Brunswick. The inhabitants of Market Drayton, in the county of Salop, say, " We will be vigilant in the detection, and " zealous in the prosecution of all such persons, " as may attempt to alienate the affections of the " people from the established constitution, either " by the circulation of disaffected publications, " seditious conversation, or any other illegal " means whatsoever." The honest associators of Tring, in Hertfordshire, declare, that they are warm friends to the liberty of the press, and to freedom of opinions; but they afterwards add, with admirable consistency, " We will exert " ourselves collectively, and individually, to " discover the authors, publishers, and dis- " tributors of seditious and inflammatory wri- " tings." Can there be any thing like the liberty of the press in this country, if the inhabitants of every parish are to be formed into committees of accusation against libellers, or those who may be termed such by the tools of power?

power? But the men of Tring also resolved, that it should be "forcibly recommended" to all inn-keepers, and victuallers, in that parish, not to permit any seditious and treasonable language to be uttered, or any inflammatory writings to be read in their houses. If any man in an inn, or tavern, were to read some of Mr. Burke's speeches, or to use such language as the duke of Richmond and Mr. Pitt did formerly about a reform in parliament, or Mr. Burke about kings and courts, would not such reading, or such language, be deemed seditious, or as tending to sedition? And yet our laws have given no peculiar privilege to these gentlemen, to use language that is unlawful to other men; at least, not out of parliament.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—I observe, that you repeatedly quote and refer to Mr. Burke; though I should suppose that gentleman could hardly be one of your favourite authors.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Sir, I have been a diligent reader of the writings of Mr. Burke; though I am often puzzled, as his friends, as well as himself, must also be, to reconcile his old politics with his new. But in his old speeches and

and writings, a mixture frequently appeared of eloquence and reason; though in his oratorical and literary efforts, for some time past, the latter ingredient seems to have been almost wholly omitted. But, to return to the associators. The inhabitants of St. Sepulchre's, London, have resolved, " That it should be earnestly recommended to all persons keeping inns, taverns, coffee and public houses, within that parish, to discourage, to the utmost of their power, every seditious meeting, club, or inflammatory discourse, at their respective houses, tending to subvert the public peace."

The worshipful society of inn-keepers, vintners, and victuallers of Bristol, have also declared, not only that they will, to the utmost of their power, suppress any inflammatory writings, and use every endeavour to bring the authors to justice, but that they would " mutually agree to disclose, and make known, any treasonable or seditious expressions which might come to their knowledge, in order that the guilty persons might receive due punishment."

Similar declarations have been made in other places: but, Sir, at a time when Englishmen had the feelings of free men, no man of the least spirit would have entered the house of a publican,

publican, who had signed such a declaration, or entered into such an association. Not only landlords, but female publicans, are raised to the office of censors of clubs, superintendants of the conversation of men, and regulators of the proper boundaries of political discussion. Some of the worthy associators of the county of Suffolk have resolved, that they “ would point out
 “ every publican within their respective parishes,
 “ as unfit to retain a licence, who did not exert
 “ him or *herself* to preserve good order, and to
 “ prevent meetings or clubs, in which seditious
 “ or treasonable subjects are agitated, being held
 “ at his or *her* house.”

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Truly, some of these things are too ridiculous. But, when men are in a great tremor, as was the case with many of my brother associators, their conduct cannot be expected to be in perfect conformity with reason.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—If the ideas of many of these associators were to prevail, a man would go to Spain or Portugal, or even to Turkey or Morocco, in order to enjoy the benefits of liberty, and the pleasures of free conversation. At all events,

events, a man, who loved liberty, would change much for the better, by going from London to Berlin; where, though an highly military and despotic government is established, the people are not deprived of the freedom of conversation. It appears to me, that if any associations are necessary in this country, the associations wanted are, not associations for the support of prerogative, but for the maintenance of the rights of the people. The associators, and those who have acted in concert with them, have endeavoured to suppress all freedom of political discussion. It is well known, that a municipal magistrate has forcibly suppressed a society, meeting for the purpose of political debate. But, in former times, such conduct, in a magistrate in the same situation, would not have been endured. When alderman Harley was lord-mayor of London, any man possessed of that office would have passed his time in the metropolis very unpleasantly, if he had attempted to suppress the various public debating societies which then subsisted. It was not then thought a crime for men, old or young, publickly to deliver their sentiments concerning the balance of Europe; and, indeed, the criminality of political discussion, in

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the city of London, seems to be quite a new discovery.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Sir, there have been great changes in the minds of men, since the period to which you refer.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Yes, there have been great changes. We have seen corporations, who used to go up to the throne with the language of free men, since approach it with language little better than that of slaves and sycophants : and, among the novelties of the age, it is not one of the least edifying, to see Mr. Alderman Wilkes at the head of an association for the suppression of seditious libels. But as to the associators, some of them, under the pretence of supporting law and the constitution, have been guilty of acts of gross and shameful oppression. But the persons, whom they have chiefly injured, have been men in narrow circumstances, and who, having little property, were incapable of procuring the protection of the law ; which, whatever may be said of its excellency, and of that of our constitution, every man who has the least knowledge of the world must be convinced, is not the same for the rich and for the poor.

poor. Some of the associators also encourage private and anonymous information, and conduct themselves in such a manner, that no man, who has any pretensions to the character of a gentleman, or a man of honour, ought to be present at any such associations.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—In the former part of our conversation, Mr. Mordaunt, you discovered much dislike at our being engaged in a war with France: but you should remember, that the French first declared war against England.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—They certainly did. But were not the measures, adopted by the British ministry, naturally calculated to produce such an event? How were the French to continue in a state of peace with a nation, or an administration, who would not treat with their ambassador, or enter into any negotiation with him; and by which he was sent out of the kingdom disrespectfully and precipitately? When M. Chauvelin was ordered to quit the kingdom in eight days, was not then war virtually declared by the court of England? I have never yet been able to learn, that, previously to the time when that minister

was ordered to leave this country, the British nation had received either injury or insult from the republic of France. As to the objection started against acknowledging M. Chauvelin as a minister, because he did not receive his credentials from a king, but from a great nation, this is an objection suited only to the understandings of the lords of the bed-chamber, and the maids of honour. Men of sense and spirit, not rendered servile by court connexions, must reject it with disdain.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It was peremptorily asserted by the ministers in parliament, that a strict neutrality respecting France had been observed by the court of Great Britain.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—It was so asserted; but when we examine into the facts, do we find that this neutrality was really adhered to? Was not the exportation of corn to France prohibited, though it was permitted to other countries? In the situation in which France was then known to be, was not this an act eminently hostile? And was not the Alien bill a clear violation of the Commercial treaty with France, though that
treaty

treaty was manifestly and highly beneficial to this country?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Much has been said concerning the attempt of the French to open the navigation of the Scheldt; and, as the Dutch are our allies, it has been thought, that this alone was a sufficient ground for engaging in a war with France.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—It could not possibly be a proper ground of war, because it was admitted even by Mr. Pitt himself, that the States General of the United Provinces, who only could be aggrieved by opening the navigation of the Scheldt, had made no requisition on this subject to the court of England. The opening of the Scheldt was in no respect likely to be injurious to Great Britain. On the contrary, there was strong reason to believe, that it would have been highly beneficial to our trade and manufactures. Was England then to be involved in a war with the French nation, because they had “procured
“ for a people the use of a river that gave them
“ a free communication with the ocean, and
“ opened even to the English a more direct
“ mode of communication with the Belgic provinces?”

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Mr. GRANTLEY.—Well, Sir, but the war, whether properly, or otherwise, is now commenced; and it has been said, that “ when “ once our country is engaged in a war, all “ questions relating to the necessity, or propriety, of entering upon it, ought to be suspended till its conclusion.”

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I am, Sir, by no means of that opinion. If a nation has entered into a war unjustly, or with too much precipitation, they cannot be too solicitous to bring about its termination. Surely, the lives of human creatures are worthy of some attention, perhaps of as much attention as the reputation of ministers of state. Though a war be commenced, yet as the representatives of the people have a right, so the people at large have also a right, to examine, whether there was sufficient cause for the war, and whether proper measures were adopted by the ministry for its prevention? A nation must be enslaved indeed, who are not permitted to express their desires to be delivered from the calamities of war, if they believe, that the continuance of war will not promote either the interest, or the honour of their country.

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Mr. GRANTLEY.—It must at least be admitted, that, by the constitution, declaring war, and making peace, are a part of the royal prerogative.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—By the present constitution, the power of making war or peace is undoubtedly vested in the king. But the prerogatives of the king were conferred on him for the benefit of the nation, and they are to be exercised for the advantage of the people, and not to their detriment; and they have always a right to inquire, whether the royal prerogatives are so exercised.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—But what could induce the ministry to engage in a war, or the parliament to concur in it, if there was any reason to believe, that it would be eventually injurious to the nation?

Mr. MORDAUNT.—It is often difficult, Sir, to penetrate the real motives and designs of ministers and courts. We must not suppose, that administration, or the parliament, have been induced to engage in any measures pernicious to the nation, by “that glaring and
“dazzling influence at which the eyes of eagles
“have

“ have blenched,” to adopt the luxuriant language of Mr. Burke. But we may be permitted to ask, whether it is a thing totally new, and absolutely impossible, for the ministry, and even the parliament of England, to be engaged in measures unfavourable to the real interests of the people? Does not the American war afford demonstrative evidence of the possibility of such an event? What high language was assumed in parliament, early in the contest between Great Britain and the colonies? One of the ministers, standing in his place, in the house of commons, would not “ deign to inquire where a Congress of vagrants “ was to be found.” What was the result? “ I conceal,” says Mr. Burke, “ the ridiculous “ figure of parliament, hurling its thunders at “ the gigantic rebellion of America; and then, “ five days after, prostrate at the feet of those “ assemblies we affected to despise; begging “ them, by the intervention of our ministerial “ sureties, to receive our submission; and “ heartily promising amendment.” And, in another speech, the same gentleman says, “ We “ sent out a solemn embassy across the Atlantic “ ocean, to lay the crown, the peerage, the “ commons of Great Britain, at the feet of the “ American congress.” These things shew, that neither ministries, nor parliaments, are infallible.

fallible. And as to the war now entered into with France, I could have wished, that the causes and reasons of that war had been rendered more obvious to common and vulgar understandings. For however highly we may estimate the wisdom of parliament, plain men, who are somewhat in the habit of exercising their understandings, will wish to know, for what reason they are to pay new and accumulated taxes; and will be led to inquire, whether our war with France be founded on justice, or policy; and whether the object of it be to establish the claims of foreign despots, and to enforce the doctrines of tyranny?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—I confess, Sir, to speak candidly, that however ready I might be to concur in the associations, from the idea of securing my own property, I could never very clearly discern the reasons, or the necessity, for a war with France. Without, however, being fully convinced of the propriety of the measure, I attended to the arguments that were urged in its support; and was willing to give as much credit as I could to the rectitude of the views of the ministry, and to the wisdom of their administration.

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Mr. MORDAUNT.—Few things, I think, are more evident, than that a nation overwhelmed with debts and taxes, as Great Britain now is, ought to engage in no war but in a case of extreme necessity. Jolinson says, “As war
 “ is the last of remedies, *cuncta prius tentanda*,
 “ all lawful expedients must be used to avoid it.
 “ As war is the extremity of evil, it is surely
 “ the duty of those, whose station intrusts them
 “ with the care of nations, to divert it from their
 “ charge.” It seems extraordinary, that a nation should be so injured as to have occasion to go to war, and yet no man be able to give a clear account of what the injury is. I know, from the most authentic information, that, before the war, the French were more desirous of being at peace with the people of England, than with any other nation. They were so far from being inclined to treat the English injuriously, that if any man in France were known to be an Englishman, he was treated with respect merely on that account. As the French nation were struggling for their liberties, they expected no countenance or support from the despots of Europe. But they naturally thought, that a brave and free nation, like that of England, who had often ardently contended for
 their

their own liberties; would view with esteem and approbation another nation, exerting every nerve in the same noble cause; and they hoped, that this esteem and approbation would not have been withdrawn, on account of those irregularities of conduct in a part of the French nation, which could hardly excite much surprize, when the difficulties and peculiarity of their situation were justly and candidly considered. It should also be remembered, that part of the irregular and indefensible acts which have happened in France, may reasonably be attributed to those evil dispositions in the lower order of the people, which are the natural result of a despotic government. When a regular system of free government has been longer established, when the people have been accustomed to the union of liberty and law, their conduct will become less censurable. A tyrannical form of government naturally produces cruelty of disposition; and men must have been some time in the habit of enjoying freedom, before they can either experience or exhibit all its advantages. But as to the late associations in England, I am apprehensive, that they have contributed much more, than the people are aware, to the commencement of hostilities with France. If these associations had a tendency to encourage the ministry

to involve the nation in a war, to which before they might be too much inclined, but concerning which they might be irresolute, from their doubts respecting the temper of the people, they may then justly be considered as very serious evils. For I know of nothing that is so likely to be fatal to the welfare and prosperity of this country, and to the security of the present establishment, as a war with the French nation.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It is certain, that war must greatly contribute to increase our taxes, and to lessen our trade, and may eventually be productive of great national calamity.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Many men of large property seemed very ready to join in the associations. But I do not think, that their conduct has at all contributed to increase the security, or the value of their property. As to those persons, whose property is chiefly lodged in the funds, they could hardly have adopted any measure more pernicious, than that of supporting any administration, which should be inclined to involve the nation in an unnecessary war. Such an event must have a natural tendency to lower the funds, though this may not be its immediate effect.

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The present critical state of Holland, and of other parts of Europe, may have occasioned foreigners to deposit large sums in our funds, which would, for some time at least, prevent that diminution in their value, which was otherwise to be expected. But the present state of things cannot last long; and no men will probably be greater sufferers by a war than the stockholders.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—There seems much reason in what you have advanced. I have myself considerable property in the funds; and, if I had before viewed the matter in this light, I should not have been quite so ready to join in the associations.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—A war with a nation consisting of twenty-five millions of people, and that nation contending for its liberties, is certainly a business of a very serious nature; and, however it may terminate, it is a war in which no honour can be obtained on the part of Great Britain. I feel for the honour, as well as for the interest of my country; and, therefore, it gives me deep concern, whenever I see it at once injured and disgraced. What the consequences
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may be of a war with France, no man can with certainty predict. But that great present evils must be the result, cannot be questioned with the least appearance of reason. Superficial and uninformed men, little acquainted with the history of nations and of wars, may be much elated at a few advantages, which may be gained over the French at the commencement of a war; but these advantages, if they should be obtained, may produce little effect with respect to the final termination of the war, and to the state of things when a peace shall take place. Defeats of the French in Holland, or in Flanders, may not materially affect the French revolution; nor can it with any degree of reason be expected, that the antient government will ever be restored. Such an event can, indeed, be wished for by no man, who is not an enemy to the liberty of the human species; such an event could be favourable only to the establishment of despotism in Europe. I would ask then, What honour will Great Britain derive from a junction with German despots; and whether the eradication of the principles of liberty will be a compensation for the millions that will be expended, and for the lives that will be lost? Are the blood and treasure of
England

England to be involved in a war, from which the people of this country have not the most remote prospect of the least possible advantage? Whence are we to derive any compensation for the increase of taxes, the loss of trade, and the decay of our manufactures? What are the objects of the present war, and what will probably be its termination? I would ask farther, Will those profuse declarations of loyalty, which have been made by the associators, either lessen the public burthens, improve our constitution, or eventually promote national prosperity, and national tranquillity?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Sir, upon duly considering all that you have said, I am sensible, that I have entered into the association, in which I have engaged, without sufficiently considering its nature, or its consequences; and of the evils and dangers of the war, in which we are unhappily involved, I have now the fullest conviction.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I am glad, Sir, that you are convinced you have been in the wrong; and I honour you for the candour of your acknowledgement. Many others will soon be convinced
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of their error. They will be instructed by reflection, and by the progress of events. The people of this country have been under a temporary delusion. But the delusion cannot last long. The nation will recover its antient energies. The people will remember, that the princes of the house of Stuart were expelled this country, and deservedly expelled, because Englishmen would not submit to a tyrannical administration. They will remember, that the princes of the house of Hanover were raised to the throne of Great Britain, in order to confirm and establish the rights of the people: and they will resolve to maintain, at whatever hazard, the FREEDOM OF CONVERSATION, the FREEDOM OF DEBATE, and the FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

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Mr. Mordaunt, I am glad to hear that you are convinced you have been in the wrong; and I honour you for the candour of your acknowledgment. Many others will soon be convinced.